

Claims

What is claimed is:

1. A system for distributing software to a storage medium located on a vehicle, said system comprising:

a transmission device, a load device, and a vehicle software file;

wherein said transmission device provides for making said vehicle software file accessible to said load device;

wherein said load device is a general purpose computer; and

wherein said load device provides for loading said vehicle software file onto the vehicle storage medium.

2. The system of claim 1, further comprising a recipient device, wherein said recipient device provides for receiving said vehicle software file from said transmission device, and wherein said recipient device provides for distributing said vehicle software file to said load device.

3. The system of claim 1, further comprising a source device, wherein said source device provides for creating said vehicle software file, and wherein said source device provides for

4. The system of claim 1, wherein said transmission device provides for transmitting an encrypted copy of said vehicle software file, wherein said vehicle software file is encrypted using a vehicle attribute.

5. The system of claim 4, wherein said vehicle attribute is a unique identifier.

6. The system of claim 5, wherein said unique identifier is a vehicle identification number.
7. The system of claim 1, wherein said load device is operated by a non-technical user.
8. The system of claim 1, wherein said vehicle software file is made accessible to said load device in a tangible medium.
9. The system of claim 8, wherein said tangible medium is mailed to a recipient device associated with said load device.
10. The system of claim 1, wherein said load device provides for loading said vehicle software file onto the vehicle storage medium through a wireless network.
11. The system of claim 1, wherein a single said transmission device transmits a plurality of vehicle software files to a plurality of recipient devices, wherein each transmitted vehicle software file has a unique encryption key based on a vehicle identification number.
12. The system of claim 11, wherein each said unique encryption key allows each said vehicle software file to run on only one specific vehicle storage medium.
13. The system of claim 1, wherein said vehicle software file is an upgrade to a navigation application.

14. The system of claim 1, wherein said transmission device provides for making said vehicle software file accessible to said load device by: (a) creating and mailing a CD-ROM to an address associated with said load device; (b) creating and mailing a DVD to an address associated with the load device; (c) e-mailing said vehicle software file as an attachment; (d) making said vehicle software file downloadable from a web site.

15. The system of claim 1, wherein said load device loads said vehicle software file onto the vehicle storage medium in less than 75% of the time it would take the vehicle software file to load from a CD-ROM drive within the vehicle.

16. The system of claim 1, wherein said load device loads said vehicle software file onto the vehicle storage medium by connecting said load device to vehicle storage medium with a USB connection.

17. A method for distributing software to embedded computers in a plurality of vehicles, comprising:

configuring the vehicle software files so that they can be loaded onto a plurality of vehicle storage mediums by vehicle users using a plurality of general purpose computers;

encrypting the vehicle software files so that each vehicle software file will only function in a subset of vehicles within the plurality of vehicles; and

making the vehicle software files accessible to a plurality of loading devices associated with the plurality of vehicles.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein said plurality of vehicle software files includes a user-assistance file that is not loaded onto any of the vehicle storage mediums.

19. The method of claim 17, wherein the vehicle hard drives are accessible to general purpose computers without removing the vehicle storage mediums from the vehicles.

20. The method of claim 17, wherein the vehicle software files are encrypted with a unique key that is a vehicle identification number.

21. The method of claim 17, wherein the vehicle software files relating to an identical component type are generated and transmitted in a substantially simultaneous manner.

22. The method of claim 17, wherein the loading of the vehicle software file from general purpose computer requires no more than 60% of the time required to load the vehicle software file from a CD-ROM player that is part of the vehicle.

23. The method of claim 17, further comprising installing a vehicle hard drive into the vehicle that is configured to be removable and accessible from the general purpose computer.

24. The method of claim 17, wherein a request for the vehicle software file is sent as an e-mail from a recipient device, and said vehicle software file is received electronically from said recipient device.

25. A method of distributing upgraded vehicle software files to vehicle storage mediums through the use of general purpose computers under the control of vehicle users, said method comprising:

encrypting the vehicle software file using a vehicle identification number as a unique key;

transmitting the vehicle software file to a plurality of different recipients, wherein each recipient receives a copy of the vehicle software file that corresponds to a vehicle identification number unique to the vehicle associated with the recipient and unique to the vehicle software file;

allowing a plurality of recipients to load their particular copy of the vehicle software file onto a vehicle hard drive corresponding to the vehicle identification number corresponding to the encryption key for the particular copy of the vehicle software file; and

prohibiting the loading of any vehicle software file onto a vehicle hard drive where the vehicle identification number for the vehicle does not correspond to the vehicle identification number serving as the encryption key for the vehicle software file.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein a plurality of loading options are made available to each recipient, and wherein a default loading option is automatically identified in accordance with a recipient profile.

27. The method of claim 25, further comprising receiving a plurality of recipient profiles from a plurality of recipients, wherein said recipient profiles specify the frequency of permitted vehicle software file transmissions.

28. The method of claim 25, wherein the vehicle software file relates to an upgrade for a navigation application being paid for by a recipient on a subscription basis.

29. The method of claim 25, wherein a receiving device associated with a recipient initiates a link with the vehicle hard drive.

30. The method of claim 25, wherein the vehicle hard drive is accessible to a plurality of embedded computer devices within the vehicle.
  
31. The method of claim 25, wherein the recipient receives the vehicle software file through a recipient device, wherein the recipient loads the vehicle software file through a load device, and wherein the recipient device is not the load device.